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DEPT FOR EAP AND EAP/CM
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/21/2031
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [HK](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: DEMOCRATIC PARTY VICE CHAIRMAN AND LEGISLATOR
PUBLICLY BEATEN UP

CLASSIFIED BY: E/P CHIEF LAURENT CHARBONNET. REASONS: 1.4(B,D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: FOUR BAT-WIELDING ASSAILANTS ATTACKED DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DP) VICE CHAIRMAN ALBERT HO ON AUGUST 20; HO SUFFERED INJURIES TO HIS HEAD, ARM, AND FACE. AFTER VISITING THE LAWMAKER IN THE HOSPITAL, CHIEF EXECUTIVE (CE) DONALD TSANG DECLARED, "WE WILL ARREST THEM (THE CULPRITS) AND BRING THEM TO JUSTICE...I DON'T CARE HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE." LAWMAKERS FROM ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM ALSO DENOUNCED THE VIOLENCE. LAU KONG-WAH, VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE PRO-BEIJING DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE FOR THE BETTERMENT AND PROGRESS OF HONG KONG (DAB), COMPLAINED THAT POLICE HAD DOWNPLAYED LAWMAKERS' PREVIOUS REPORTS OF VANDALISM OR INTIMIDATION AND SUGGESTED THAT POLICE PROVIDE BETTER PROTECTION FOR LEGISLATORS. THE ASSAILANTS' MOTIVE WAS NOT IMMEDIATELY CLEAR, BUT THE MEDIA IS SPECULATING THAT THE ASSAULT MAY BE RELATED TO HIS WORK AS AN ATTORNEY FOR WINNIE HO (NO RELATION TO ALBERT). WINNIE HO, THE YOUNGER SISTER OF CASINO TYCOON STANLEY HO, HAS FILED A LAWSUIT AGAINST THE TYCOON'S LISTING OF THE SOCIEDADE DE JOGOS DE MACAU; SHE HAS ALSO RUN FULL-PAGE ADS IN THE LOCAL CHINESE NEWSPAPERS ACCUSING HER BROTHER OF MONEY LAUNDERING. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) COMMENT: ALBERT HO WEARS MANY HATS AND IS FREQUENTLY IN THE MIDDLE OF CONTROVERSIAL ACTIVITIES AND POSITIONS. HE IS REPORTEDLY THE ONLY LEGISLATOR TO HAVE PUBLICLY SPOKEN OUT ON BEHALF OF THE FALUNGONG AND HEADS AN ORGANIZATION BEIJING CONSIDERS SUBVERSIVE. THAT SAID, BEING A LAWYER FOR THE ESTRANGED SISTER OF STANLEY HO IS INHERENTLY ALSO A DANGEROUS OCCUPATION. IT'S TOO EARLY TO SAY FOR SURE, BUT THIS ATTACK MAY TURN OUT TO HAVE MORE TO DO WITH MONEY AND LEGAL DISPUTES THAN WITH POLITICS. END COMMENT.

LAWMAKER TARGETED FOR ATTACK

13. (SBU) THE FOUR ASSAILANTS ATTACKED DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DP) VICE CHAIRMAN ALBERT HO AUGUST 20 WITH BASEBALL BATS AND POLICE-STYLE BATONS AFTER HE AND OTHER DP MEMBERS LED A GROUP OF 200 PROTESTERS IN A PEACEFUL MARCH AGAINST A PROPOSED GOODS AND SERVICES TAX. ACCORDING TO DP COLLEAGUE HOWARD LAM, THE ATTACKERS ENTERED THE CROWDED MCDONALD'S RESTAURANT WHERE HO WAS DINING, SHOVED HIM TO THE GROUND AND BEAT HIM FOR SEVERAL MINUTES BEFORE FLEEING. LAM WAS ALSO HIT IN THE HEAD AND CHEST WHEN HE TRIED TO PROTECT HO. HO SUFFERED HEAD, ARM, AND FACIAL INJURIES, INCLUDING A BROKEN NOSE, AND IS CURRENTLY LISTED IN STABLE CONDITION BY THE HOSPITAL.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICIANS DENOUNCE ASSAULT

¶4. (SBU) AFTER VISITING HO IN THE HOSPITAL, CHIEF EXECUTIVE (CE) DONALD TSANG TOLD REPORTERS THAT HE WAS VERY ANGRY ABOUT THE ATTACK. "WE WILL ARREST THEM AND BRING THEM TO JUSTICE...I DON'T CARE HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE." SECRETARY FOR SECURITY AMBROSE LEE ADDED THAT HONG KONG WAS "A FREE SOCIETY THAT ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO LAW AND WE WILL NOT TOLERATE SUCH A VIOLENT ACT."

¶5. (SBU) LAWMAKERS FROM ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM DENOUNCED THE VIOLENCE. DP CHAIRMAN LEE WING-TAT DESCRIBED THE ASSAULT AS "ORGANIZED AND PREMEDITATED," THOUGH HE SPECULATED THAT IT WAS NOT POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. FRONTIER LEGISLATOR EMILY LAU SAID, "HONG KONG PRIDES ITSELF ON BEING A SAFE CITY. BUT THE VIOLENT ATTACK AGAINST MR. HO IS OUTRAGEOUS." LAU KONG-WAH, VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE FOR THE BETTERMENT AND PROGRESS OF HONG KONG (DAB) COMPLAINED THAT POLICE HAD DOWNPLAYED LAWMAKERS' PREVIOUS REPORTS OF VANDALISM OR INTIMIDATION. "ITS NOT UNUSUAL FOR LEGISLATORS TO RECEIVE THREATS." LAU SUGGESTED THAT "POLICE SHOULD PROVIDE ADEQUATE PROTECTION TO LAWMAKERS ENGAGING IN PUBLIC SERVICE." CIVIC PARTY MEMBER RONNIE TONG SAID, "THIS IS A DIRECT CHALLENGE TO THE RULE OF LAW." HE ADDED THAT HIS PARTY HAD ALSO RECEIVED THREATENING LETTERS, LIKELY REFERRING TO THE DEATH THREAT AND CUTTER BLADE CP LEADER AUDREY EU RECIEVED TWO WEEKS AGO.

RECENT THREATS AND ATTACKS AGAINST HO

¶6. (SBU) THE ATTACKERS' MOTIVATION WAS NOT IMMEDIATELY CLEAR, BUT HO TOLD REPORTERS THAT IT MIGHT BE RELATED TO HIS ROLE AS A LEGISLATOR OR A LAWYER. HO HAS BEEN THREATENED AND ATTACKED BEFORE: IN MAY, INDIGENOUS VILLAGERS WARNED HO ABOUT HIS CRITICISM OF A POLICY WHICH GRANTS SMALL HOUSE ALLOTMENTS TO INDIGENOUS MALE VILLAGERS. "IF YOU MESS WITH US, WE WILL

DEFINITELY MESS WITH YOU," THEY SAID IN A LETTER TO HO. IN A SEPARATE INCIDENT, AN UNIDENTIFIED MAN WALKED INTO HO'S OFFICE ON JUNE 27, STRUCK HIM ONCE ON THE SHOULDER AND THEN LEFT. HO, WHO WAS NOT BADLY INJURED, TOLD THE "ORIENTAL DAILY" THAT HE WOULD NOT REPORT THE CASE AND DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE INCIDENT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH POLITICS.

¶7. (SBU) THE MEDIA HAS SPECULATED THAT THE ASSAULT MAY BE RELATED TO HO'S WORK AS AN ATTORNEY FOR WINNIE HO. WINNIE HO, THE YOUNGER SISTER OF CASINO TYCOON STANLEY HO, HAS FILED A LAWSUIT AGAINST THE TYCOONS LISTING OF THE SOCIEDADE DE JOGOS DE MACAU; SHE HAS ALSO RUN FULL-PAGE ADS IN THE LOCAL CHINESE NEWSPAPERS ACCUSING HER BROTHER OF MONEY LAUNDERING ACTIVITIES. THE "ORIENTAL DAILY" NOTED THAT ONE OF WINNIE HO'S LAWYERS WAS PREVIOUSLY ATTACKED IN HONG KONG IN SEPTEMBER 2002 AND AGAIN IN JANUARY 2003; AUTHORITIES HAVE MADE NO ARRESTS IN THESE CASES. WINNIE HO ISSUED A STATEMENT CONDEMNING THE ATTACK ON ALBERT HO.

BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FOR ALBERT HO

¶8. (SBU) ALBERT HO, 53, HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL REPRESENTING THE NEW TERRITORIES WEST CONSTITUENCY SINCE 1995 AND IS ALSO AN ELECTED MEMBER OF THE TUEN MUN DISTRICT COUNCIL. HO HELPED FOUND THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND THE HONG KONG ALLIANCE IN SUPPORT OF THE PATRIOTIC AND DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT IN CHINA, AN ORGANIZATION BRANDED "SUBVERSIVE" BY BEIJING. HE IS ALSO A PROMINENT LEADER OF THE HONG KONG-BASED ACTION COMMITTEE FOR DEFENDING THE DIAOYU ISLANDS, WHICH RECENTLY POSTPONED A SCHEDULED EXPEDITION TO DIAOYU ISLAND. MORE RECENTLY, HO STAGED A 24-HOUR HUNGER STRIKE IN SUPPORT OF MAINLAND LAWYER GAO ZHISHENG ON JUNE 24. CUNNINGHAM